



**WHAT TO PACK FOR AN EMERGENCY?
DATCP SETS OPEN HOUSE SEPT. 10
SHOWCASING EMERGENCY PREPARATIONS**

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Contact: Donna Gilson
608-224-5130**

MADISON – New technologies and equipment that would help Wisconsin respond to agricultural emergencies will be on public display Friday, Sept. 10, at the State Agricultural Building.

The Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection will host an open house at its building at 2811 Agriculture Drive in Madison from noon to 3:00 p.m.

“We invite both agricultural producers and their non-farming neighbors to stop by and see the tools we have, and hear about the skills we’ve developed to meet agricultural emergencies such as animal disease outbreaks, plant pest invasions, chemical contamination, and even the effects on agriculture of general emergencies like tornadoes, flooding, or nuclear accidents,” said Secretary Rod Nilsestuen.

Visitors to the open house will see:

- An emergency response trailer equipped with space for taking laboratory samples and doing other emergency on-site work, as well as providing cleanup and sleeping space for employees deployed on 24-hour duty.
- A second, smaller trailer and the equipment it will haul, including generators and lighting for nighttime outdoor work.
- Geographic information system (GIS) technology that allows map-making in layers. Eventually, the department may be able to map farms, crops, food processing plants with other information such as soil type, water source, geographical features, and roads – all vital in animal carcass disposal, evacuation areas and routes, potential for contamination, and other issues that arise in emergencies. Ultimately, this information may be meshed with data from other agencies as well.
- Digital photography equipment used in food safety and other investigations conducted by the department and also used during this summer’s tornado and flood emergencies.
- A slide presentation on livestock premises identification in Wisconsin, vital in tracking sources and potential exposure in case of animal disease outbreak and even in the case of a food-borne illness outbreak. Governor Jim Doyle signed legislation in April making Wisconsin the first and only state in the nation to make premises identification registration mandatory.

In addition, visitors will find information from the Wisconsin Farm Center about financial and emotional recovery after a disaster, from the Consumer Protection Bureau about guarding against fraudulent contractors who flock to disaster scenes, from the Agrichemical Bureau about handling spills and poisoning/contamination cases, and from the Plant Industry Bureau about soybean rust, *Ralstonia* and other potential bioterrorism agents that threaten crops.

“We’ve always been in the business of responding to crises along with our day-to-day work,” Sec. Nilsestuen said. “Fortunately, we haven’t had to deal with any disasters on the magnitude of Sept. 11, but that day woke us all up to the possibilities in a new age of terrorism. Since then, we’ve evaluated our vulnerabilities and gotten training and equipment to help us address those vulnerabilities. That’s what folks will see here next Friday.”

“But all this training and equipment would do little good if it got put on the shelf until a major disaster hit, whether accidental, natural, or terrorist act. It’s helping us do our jobs better every day, practicing on the more routine situations we face of small-scale food or feed contamination, testing for animal diseases, monitoring groundwater. Our daily work keeps us aware of what’s going on out there, so we notice quickly when something’s amiss and keeps us prepared for bigger emergencies.”

Nilsestuen added, “A large part of our preparation has consisted of developing closer relationships with partners including other agencies and with industry. To a large extent, emergency preparedness rests on the shoulders of private industry, producers and citizens. We appreciate the efforts they’ve made, and now we’re inviting them to see what we’ve done.”

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